PCWORLD.COM
TECHNOLOGY ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST

Acronis Offers New and Improved PC Utilities

Upgraded applications include privacy and migration tools, and a bundled utility suite with a high degree of difficulty.

Lincoln Spector, special to PCWorld.com
Wednesday, September 04, 2002

This week Acronis releases four new utilities--or at least refurbished and repackaged ones--plus a bundled suite of existing programs.

The utilities include tools for cleaning cookies, migrating to a new PC, and running two operating systems. The bundled suite, on the other hand, is not necessarily geared toward everyday use by the average user.

Acronis Privacy Expert 2003, the one truly new product released, is designed with mainstream users in mind. Competing with programs such as CleanSweep and Internet Cleanup, Privacy Expert wipes out records of where you've been online and on your computer. It cleans out your cookies, temporary Internet files, Internet history, Run command history, recent documents, and other sources of potential embarrassment.

And Privacy Expert doesn't just delete this information--it destroys the data so that it cannot be retrieved. It even wipes the "empty" space on your drive, which can contain data from old deleted files. Privacy Expert 2003 lists for $30.

Not Quite New

The other three featured programs, TrueImage Deluxe 6.0, MigrateEasy Deluxe 6.0, and OS Selector 8.0, aren't really new. Some have benefited from minor tweaking. Others have received a facelift, yielding Windows XP-style user interfaces with plenty of one-click icons and useful wizards, according to Acronis.

Previously, these programs were available only on Acronis's Web site; now they are available packaged in boxes.

The TrueImage Deluxe disk imager (list price: $50) is basically the same program we reviewed in the August issue of PC World. The only new additions are better network and Linux support.

MigrateEasy Deluxe (list price: $40) copies the contents of one hard drive to another. It's a useful tool if you're upgrading your hard drive, but not your whole computer. And if you have TrueImage or another imaging program, MigrateEasy Deluxe is redundant.

OS Selector 8.0 (list price: $50) lets you install and switch between different operating systems, a handy capability if you want to try out XP or Linux without relinquishing your current OS. It comes with a full partitioning program and can organize your drive for multiple operating systems.

PowerUtilities 2003

When a company announces four new products and a suite at the same time, you might expect some connection between the two. But only two of the new stand-alone products--Privacy Expert and MigrateEasy--appear in the new PowerUtilities 2003 suite.

The other three programs in the suite are decidedly techie in nature. All are available online but are not sold individually at retail. DriveCleanser 6.0 securely deletes a hard drive or partition so that it can't be recovered. Recovery Expert recovers deleted or lost partitions or drives--though not, of course, those destroyed with DriveCleanser. Neither program can destroy or recover only specific files or folders. Disk Editor Deluxe lets you manually alter the contents of your drive byte-by-byte. Unless you're very technically inclined, you do not want to do this.

PowerUtilities 2003 lists for $60. Purchased separately, the individual products would cost $195.

Programs that back up, restore, wipe, or write directly to drives can't do all of their work from inside Windows. At some point they have to boot to another operating system. Most competing programs--Drive Image, System Commander, and so on--reboot to DOS when Windows can't do the job. But the Acronis programs reboot to Linux instead. This allows compatibility with such devices as USB 2.0 drives that the aging DOS doesn't support.